

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T MOGADISCIO 0675

EXDIS

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SUBJECT: SIAD MEETING WITH OSMAN SABBE OF PLF: ETHIOPIA AND TFAI

REF: MOGADISCIO 357

1. IN PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, I HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY TWO FAIRLY RELIABLE SOURCES THAT DURING HIS TALKS WITH SIAD IN MOGADISCIO ON MARCH 9, PRESIDENT SIAD GAVE OSMAN SABBE SECRET VERBAL ASSURANCES THAT HE WOULD HELP PLF IN ERITREA. SIAD REPORTEDLY TOLD OSMAN SALEH SABBE THAT HE WOULD PROVIDE AID TO ELF AND WOULD AT SAME TIME GET WEAPONS TO DISSIDENT QTE GALLA UNQTE TRIBESMEN IN ETHIOPIA IN REVOLT AGAINST DIRG IN ADDIS. SIAD TOLD OSMAN SABBE AT SAME TIME THAT IN THIS WAY HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD TO HASTEN COLLAPSE OF OLD ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE.

2. ALTHOUGH I TENDED TO DISCOUNT THESE REPORTS EARLIER, I QUESTIONED EGYPTIAN MIL ATTACHE NASR EL DIN CLOSELY ABOUT THESE REPORTS ON MAY 7. NASR-EL-DIN TOLD ME THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT SIAD HAD GIVEN OSMAN VERBAL ASSURANCES ABOUT PROVIDING ARMS FOR QTE GALLA UNQTE PEOPLES IF THEY WERE TO RISE UP AGAINST EPMG. NASR-EL-DIN SAID THAT SIAD HAD MADE HIS ASSURANCES VERBAL RATHER THAN IN WRITING AND HAD TOLD OSMAN SABBE THAT HIS ASSURANCES WERE BEING MADE NOTWITHSTANDING QTE GREAT POWER UNQTE INFLUENCE IN REGION. BY QTE GREAT POWER UNQTE, NASR-EL-DIN SAID SIAD WAS TALKING ABOUT USSR AND US AND HE IMPLIED THAT SIAD WAS VERBALLY CIRCUMVENTING TACIT UNDERSTANDING WITH USSR WHICH TIED HIS HANDS.

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3. NASR-EL-DIN SAID FURTHER THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR SAMSONOV HAD SUBSEQUENTLY LEARNED OF SIAD'S ASSURANCES TO OSMAN SABBE AND WAS FURIOUS. SIAD'S VERBAL COMMITMENT TO OSMAN SABBE THAT HE WOULD ASSIST INSURRECTION IN ETHIOPIA WAS ONE OF PROBLEMS WHICH HAD LED TO SOVIET/SIAD ESTRANGEMENT IN MARCH BUT WHICH HAD NOW BEEN SMOOTHED OVER (MOGADISCIO 0621).

4. I TOLD NASR-EL-DIN THAT I DIDN'T QUITE UNDERSTAND HOW SIAD ON ONE HAND COULD IMPRISON OGADEN LEADERS AND ALIENATE OGADEN TRIBESMEN WHO WANTED ARMS, YET ON OTHER HAND COMMIT HIMSELF TO ARM ETHIOPIAN GALLAS. THERE WERE, I THOUGHT, BBPLICATE BUT SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS TO BE FACED BY SIAD IN GETTING ARMS TO ETHIOPIA, ESPECIALLY SINCE SOMALI GUNRUNNERS WHO MIGHT CONVEY THOSE ARMS WOULD BE INCLINED TO USE THEM ON THEIR OWN BEHALF. SIAD MOREOVER DIDN'T TRUST HIS OWN ARMY WITH ARMED WEAPONS. WHO THEN WOULD GET RIFLES AND AMMO TO ETHIOPIA? NASR SAID THAT THIS MIGHT PRESENT PROBLEMS BUT THAT HE THOUGHT ARMS DELIVERIES COULD BE MANAGED.

5. I ASKED NASR IF HE SPECIFICALLY CONNECTED SIAD PROMISE TO OSMAN WITH ARRIVAL OF ALGERIAN SHIPLOAD OF WEAPONS WHICH ARRIVED IN MOGADISCIO MAY 1 (MOGADISCIO 0642). NASR SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUSL THAT WEAPONS WERE NOT RPT NOT FOR SNA, WHICH HAD NO USE FOR SUCH AN ASSORTMENT. HE COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THEY WERE FOR QTE AFRICAN LIBERATION UNQTE. ALGERIA WAS FERVENT SUPPORTER OF ALC AND HE BELIEVED WEAPONS MAY BE INTENDED TO BE USED IN THAT WAY. GIVEN PRESSURES SOVIETS PUT ON SIAD TO REFRAIN FROM ACTIVITY IN OGADEN OR ELSEWHERE IN ETHIOPIA, HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED THAT TFAI WAS MORE LOGICAL TARGET AND THAT SOVIETS MIGHT SUPPORT STEP-UP IN SOMALI LIBERATION EFFORT IN TFAI.

6. I SAID I HAD RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT SAMANTAR HAD MADE SOMEWHAT BELLICOSE SPEECH ABOUT DJIBOUTI TO HIS OFFICER CORPS ON MAY 1. SAMANTAR HAD TOLD HIS OFFICERS THAT WHILE THEY HAD ENJOYED PEACE FOR OVER DECADE, HE WAS SKEPTICAL THAT PEACE WOULD ENDURE AND FORESAW POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT SOON FIGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THEIR BROTHERS TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM COLONIALISTS. SAMANTAR THEN TOLD SNA OFFICERS THAT TWO QTE BRAVE MEN UNQTE HAD BEEN THROWN OUT OF DJIBOUTI -- THE SOMALI CONSUL GENERAL AND FIRST SECRETARY.

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7. NASR-EL-DIN SAID SAMANTAR HAD MADE SUCH A SPEECH BUT HE THOUGHT THAT AT THIS TIME IT WAS MORE RHETORIC THAN ANYTHING ELSE. IT DID SHOW THAT GSDR SMARTING FROM TREATMENT BY FRENCH. ARAB LEAGUE FONMIN CONFERENCE IN CAIRO HOWEVER HAD GIVEN GENERAL ENDORSEMENT TO TFAI LIBERATION EFFORT BUT, EXCEPT FOR SOMALIA AND PERHAPS SOVIETS, FEW ARABS IN REGION INCLINED TO PUSH IT. HE WAS LESS CERTAIN BOUT ALGERIANS.

HAMRICK

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